




State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
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Deborah A. Gist
Commissioner

August 7, 2009

TO: All Superintendents

FROM: Deborah A. Gist, Commissioner 

SUBJECT: Open Door for Superintendents

My first month as Commissioner of Education has proven to be a very exciting time, during which I've come to know many of our fine education leaders. I have come to see that we have the basic tools for success, including educators who are deeply committed to accelerated improvement, a strong foundation of work to build upon, and the engaged advocacy of many citizens and organizations.

Though Rhode Island has made progress in improving its education system, we all can agree that we must do more to improve performance for all of our students. In particular, we must address the inequities contributing to our achievement gaps. I am certain that we can and will turn Rhode Island schools around and that we will have a system of education in our state that prepares our students to be competitive not only with their peers in other states but also around the world.

To lead this effort, I will reach out to work with those who know our students best: parents, educators (including teachers, principals, superintendents, school committees, and labor unions), and the students themselves.

During my first 100 days as Commissioner, I am engaging with community groups, visiting summer programs, and meeting with superintendents, school committee members, education groups, business groups, and student groups. Once the school year starts, I will visit every school district, state-operated school, and independent charter school to hear from parents, students, teachers, administrators, and civic leaders. The purpose is both to gather information and to build the support for and the readiness to make this change successful.

Throughout this process, as I develop a strategic plan for improving student achievement in Rhode Island, I will work closely with the Rhode Island School Superintendents Association and the other professional associations in the state to set aggressive goals to advance learning for all.

Even as I work with your association, some of you at times may have issues that you would like to discuss with me individually. Therefore, I will set aside time on my monthly calendar for "open door" meetings with individual superintendents. If you have any issue that you would like to bring to my attention, you may contact my assistant, Angela Teixeira, at 222-4690, or angela.teixeira@ride.ri.gov, to reserve a block of time during my "open door" for superintendents.

I am looking forward to visiting your schools this fall!

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